Wing by Wing

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There are no old houses in Hiroshima except this one circled in flowering trees, the leaves a green I've never seen before they look watercolor, dripping with shine, dripping with vivacity and brilliance.

But the building, the dome, its shell frail metal, it aches from the weight of all those spirits falling down like rain all those leaves and hair and bits of fruit left on the table to burn and wash away.

Now life flourishes past the dome near the river. Past the Coca Cola truck parked in the center of the road, past the shogakusei boy in a yellow hat waiting for his mother, past an old man smoking, past two hippies in love in Bob Marley shirts, past the Yahoo BB sales women in short red skirts, past a young man sleeping on a bench stands a giant cement angel, her wings bent back in the wind. She gathers her children turned to ash.

At her feet are piled thousands of origami peace cranes sent by the people of Russia, New Zealand, Maui, and Peru, cranes of gum wrappers colored purple, of cardboard painted gold with blue trim, of paper drawn carefully with small pink flowers. These cranes, some naked out there in the wind, some with plastic bags covering their tails and smooth creased beaks to protect them from the rain, each one waits silently for me to ring the peace bell with honesty and summon the souls of the dust children to come pick them up, wing by wing, and play.